

POINT ARENA LIGHT STATION  
Lighthouse Road  
Point Arena  
Mendocino County  
California

HALS CA-24  
CA-24

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### POINT ARENA LIGHT STATION

HALS NO. CA-24

Location: Lighthouse Road, Point Arena, Mendocino County, CA  
Lat: 38.5710 Long: -123.4442

Significance: The Point Arena Lighthouse is significant as one in a series of lighthouses along the Pacific coast that were built to save lives and commercial property. The need for the lighthouse was particularly acute after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake because ships loaded with lumber needed to rebuild San Francisco would be sailing down the along the north coast. A temporary lighthouse was quickly built to protect seafarers while the current lighthouse was under construction.

History: The current lighthouse at Point Arena replaced the original structure that was damaged by the 1906 San Francisco earthquake which also damaged the town of Point Arena. The town of Point Arena is first mentioned in 1792 by Captain George Vancouver who spent the night off the coast in his ship 'Discovery'. He referred to the point as "Punta Barro de Arena".

The new reinforced concrete lighthouse tower replaced the original brick structure. Construction of the tower and other structures at the site was overseen by George Hooke, Lighthouse Service Engineer. It is situated on a prominent headland in southwestern Mendocino County and is one of the two tallest lighthouses on the California coastline.

The property includes four lighthouse keepers cottages, now used as rentals for tourists, a fog house, 2 water tanks and 3 small ancillary buildings. A buttress room was added to the base of the new tower when it was constructed to add strength. A simple fence with 2 horizontal boards painted white defines the top of the bluff beyond which eroded cliffs drop off into the Pacific. At the base of the cliff is a rocky shore. Circulation at the site is utilitarian with straight, concrete walkways connecting the cottages to the lighthouse, and a parallel asphalt road for vehicular traffic.

The vegetation surrounding the lighthouse buildings reflects the harsh conditions. Other than a few isolated Monterey cypress / *Cupressus macrocarpa*, the vegetation is low growing, only a few inches high and is well adapted to the fog, intense wind and salt laden air. In Spring, the carpet of plants provides a colorful display that includes sea thrift / *Armeria maritima*; California poppy / *Escholtzia californica*; common gumplant / *Grindelia stricta venulosa*; seaside daisy / *Erigeron glauca*; Douglas iris / *Iris douglasiana*; and many other perennials, grasses and ground cover plants. Information that includes dates,

builders/designers, owners, uses, and some discussion of the site evolution and the context in which it was created and later evolved.

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- Interview Dave Johnson, the Mills College landscape architect in 1996...

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Figure 1. Lighthouse and support buildings taken from Lighthouse Road showing the rugged cliffs and coastline (Chris Pattillo, May 21, 2005).

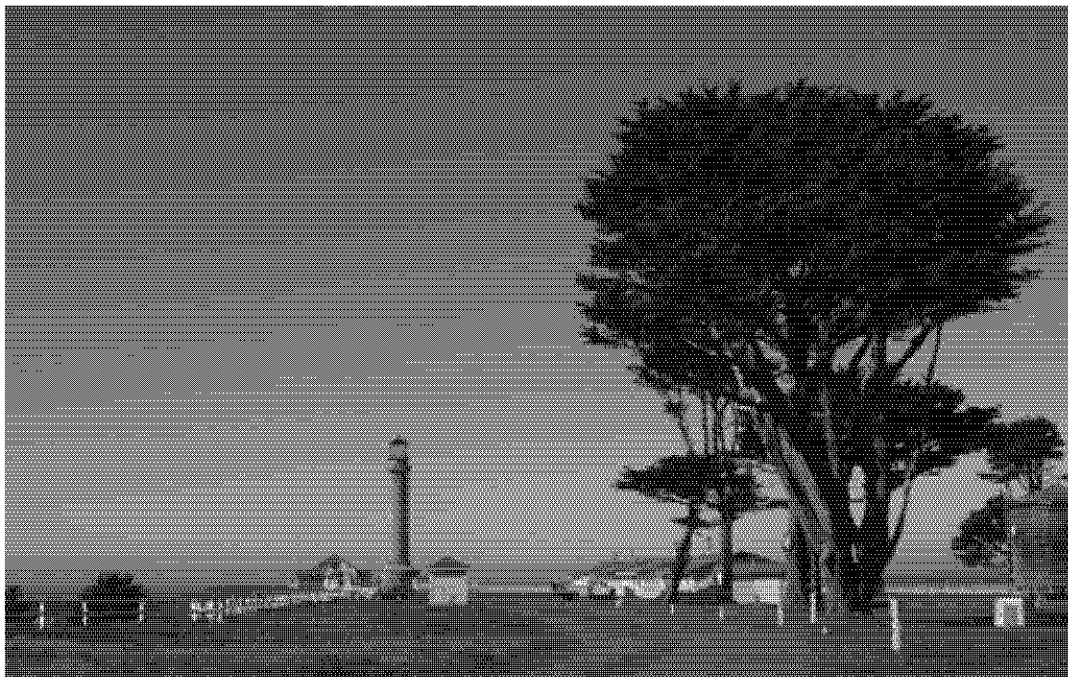


Figure 2. Point Arena Lighthouse, cottages, fog building and group of Monterey Cypress trees (Chris Pattillo, February 8, 2009).